



Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

June 24, 2025

Re: HB 2977 (Increases the state transient lodging tax)

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

This testimony is submitted by the Oregon Wildlife Coalition **in support of HB 2977 A-Engrossed**. Members of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition include Bird Alliance of Oregon, Cascadia Wildlands, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Voters Oregon, Humane World for Animals, Oregon Wild, Think Wild, and Western Environmental Law Center.

Oregon is fortunate to be home to a diverse array of fish and wildlife species and the habitats they rely on. However, growing threats from climate change, invasive species, habitat loss and fragmentation, and other human-made and natural-caused impacts are taking a toll on native wildlife's ability to thrive. In Oregon, there are nearly 300 species that are considered "species of greatest conservation need," meaning they face an elevated risk of extinction. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has a blueprint for conserving these species and habitats, known as the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Nearshore Strategy (Conservation Strategies). The goals of the Conservation Strategies are to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, preventing declines of at-risk species, and reversing declines in these resources where possible.

However, due to inconsistent and insufficient funding for these conservation programs, ODFW lacks the resources to implement many of the necessary actions recommended in the Conservation Strategies. The combination of mounting threats to our fish and wildlife, along with a lack of dedicated funding to address these issues, underscores the urgency of passing HB 2977. Further delay puts these species' future in jeopardy.

To fund these critical conservation programs, HB 2977 would utilize a 1.00% increase in the state transient lodging tax to generate approximately \$30 million a year for proactive, collaborative wildlife and habitat conservation. This is a bold, yet cost-effective solution that would provide a steady, sustainable source of funds to ODFW's Conservation Strategies to help offset the increasing impacts of tourism and other natural and human-caused impacts on Oregon's most at-risk fish, wildlife, and habitats.

HB 2977 would utilize an additional .25% increase in the state transient lodging tax to fund critical conservation initiatives such as the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, ODFW's Wildlife Connectivity Program, the Department of Justice and Oregon State Police Anti-Poaching Programs and Department of Agriculture's Invasive Species Program. HB 2977 would also sustainably invest in a Wildlife Stewardship Program, creating three wildlife coexistence positions throughout Oregon and establishing and investing in a Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Program. Bob Sallinger championed and advocated for the creation of the Wildlife Stewardship Program, and we are committed to the success of this program in celebration of his legacy and to protecting the wildlife he cared about so deeply.

Lastly, the bill also includes funding for the wolf compensation and depredation fund. The conservation community, including the Oregon Wildlife Coalition, has opposed SB 777 because we do not consider it a sound wolf management policy with the multiplier. However, SB 777 has passed, which increases the compensation rate to five times the market value. We believe that implementing such a policy without sufficient funds will be even more detrimental to building wolf tolerance and harm wolf conservation. If funds run out early and losses are not compensated, then the intolerance for wolves only increases.

Oregonians have a strong interest in healthy populations of native flora and fauna and the habitats that sustain them, and HB 2977 provides the sustained funding ODFW needs to conserve and recover Oregon's most vulnerable wildlife and habitat while also providing funding for a variety of critical conservation initiatives.

We urge you to **vote YES on HB 2977.**

Sincerely,

*Bird Alliance of Oregon
Cascadia Wildlands
Defenders of Wildlife
Humane Voters Oregon*

*Humane World for Animals
Think Wild
Oregon Wild
Western Environmental Law Center*